BV
4305
.B8

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

FORCE COLLECTION.]
Chap. BV4305
Shelf .B8

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

NATIONAL CHARACTER.

A

THANKSGIVING DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED NOVEMBER 15TH, 1855,

IN THE

Franklin Street Presbyterian Church,

BY THE PASTOR,

REV. N. C. BURT.

Library of Congress
1867
City of Washington.

BALTIMORE:
PRINTED BY JOHN D. TOY.

1855.

Copy 1

BV4305
.B8

Baltimore, *November* 17, 1855.

Rev. N. C. Burt,

Pastor of Franklin Street Presbyterian Church:

Dear Sir—We earnestly solicit a copy of the Discourse delivered by you on Thanksgiving day, for publication.

With great respect, yours, &c.

George S. Gibson.
R. K. Hawley.
J. Henry Stickney.
I. C. Canfield.
Horace W. Taylor.
Jos. B. Fenby.
S. Patterson.
C. D. Culbertson.
R. H. Humphreys.
Henry D. Harvey.
David Ferguson.
John Bigham.
E. S. Allnutt.
Chas. U. Stobie.
H. W. Hayden.
Hiram Woods.
Geo. W. Uhler.
E. B. Babbitt.
Ashur Clarke.
M. M. Bigham.
Wm. L. McCormick.
Jno. Barber.
Algernon R. Wood.
Alexander Close.
John R. Cole.
M. Shaw.
A. Coulter.
J. Perkins Fleming.
James V. D. Stewart.
Joel N. Blake.
J. Henry Giese.
W. E. Barber.
Robert Busby.
John S. McKim.
J. Dean Smith.
David S. Courtenay.
Wm. R. Seevers.
S. A. Leakin.
Patrick Gibson.
J. P. Polk.
William White.
Geo. W. Bradford.
Edward Duffy.
Thos. H. Quinan.
Samuel W. Barber.
Matthew Horn.
Morgan Coleman.
Stephen Williams.
James Wilson, Howard-St.
J. H. Patterson.
Lancaster Ould.
Geo. C. Morton.
Geo. Ross Veazey.
Daniel Holliday.
D. H. Blanchard.
E. H. Thomson.
W. J. Dickey.
John P. Coulter.
Alex. E. Brown.
H. C. Reed.
Cornelius E. Beatty.
John T. Dick.
Wm. H. Brown.
R. H. Pennington.
John P. Richardson.
Robert Leslie.

Baltimore, *November* 25, 1855.

Gentlemen—The request for a copy of my Thanksgiving Discourse, so generally made, I cannot refuse. The manuscript is herewith placed at your disposal.

Very truly yours,

N. C. BURT.

Dr. G. S. Gibson.

R. K. Hawley, Esq.

J. Henry Stickney, Esq. and others.

DISCOURSE.

Psalm 33: 12.—Blessed is the Nation whose God is the Lord.

We have met to-day, at the call of the Governor of this Commonwealth, to render thanks to the Supreme Governor of the world for his mercies granted us during the past year. Surely we have abundant cause for thanksgiving. In the present instance, our annual festival not only calls us to recognize the common bounties of God's providence most richly bestowed, but also affords a most suitable opportunity for rendering special offerings of gratitude for our happy exemption from that pestilence, which, for months just past, lifted its frowning clouds in our near horizon, and committed its devastations on our very borders,—a pestilence which, if God had permitted it to march upon our City and to do a like deadly work amidst our population, would now be exulting over as many slain victims from among us, as there are persons now assembled in all our Churches for this thanksgiving service. Let us give hearty thanks for this distinguishing sparing goodness.

Being called together by our civil authorities, and that to recognize the hand of God over us as a people, the occasion is suitable for considering the general subject of National Character, and in connection with it, the duties and destinies of our own nation.

What now, to begin at the beginning, is the proper idea of a nation? The idea is a complex one, involving, to a greater or less extent, the ideas of community of birth, community of language, occupation of the same territory, citizenship under the same government.

The *word* nation signifies a body of men descended from the same progenitor,—those having community of birth. We may, from the sense of the word, call the Jews a nation, though using a diversity of languages, and though scattered over the earth, without distinct territory or separate government.

Community of language commonly follows upon community of birth. Yet community of language does not of itself determine or secure nationality. The English and ourselves speak the same language, yet are distinct nations. The Swiss are one nation, yet speak some of them French, others German, others Italian.

Occupation of the same territory is not essential to nationality. Not only may a nation be scattered,—its parts dwelling in several lands,—as in the case of the Jews, but a nation may migrate in a body and preserve its national character in transit, or it may have no fixed territorial abode whatever. The Tartars and the Arabs

are nations ever in motion, and held but the most loosely by any tenure of soil.

And even citizenship under the same government, does not of itself exhaust the idea of a nation. Russia may be said to include many nations under her sway.

Yet the ideas of race, language, country and government, all enter into, and with greater or less distinctness, and to a greater or less extent, constitute the general idea of a nation. The French have in general the same origin: they speak the same language: they possess a definite territory: they live under one government. They are of Gallic origin: we call their language French: their home is France: they are the subjects of Napoleon.

These several ideas of a nation do not, however, seem to be equally essential. It is in the idea of Government, the idea of the State, in which an associated body of men rises to view as a personality, and as a sovereign power, clothed with divine privileges and prerogatives, subsisting for high moral ends, dispensing justice amongst its own citizens in the name of God, and treating with other States as responsible persons like itself, with whom it dwells as in a family of nations to possess the earth;—it is in this idea that the ideas of community of origin and of language, and occupation of the same territory, merge themselves as subordinate or accidental, and that our view of a nation is most satisfactory and complete.

The functions of supreme government are rarely exercised over a very small body of men. And nations need

to be of some magnitude to realize the benefits of national existence. A nation, just in virtue of its national constitution, is in a measure separated from the rest of mankind. It has an existence by itself. It ought, then, to have a completeness in itself. It should be made up of so many and such variety of parts, that these parts in their inter-action, may produce a sufficient life. Its classes of citizens and their occupations, should be so diversified and numerous, that in the mutual dependence and support, the highest possible benefit may result. *Size* has to do materially with the idea of a nation. This, indeed, makes all the difference between a family and a nation, if only sovereign prerogatives be conceded to the family, as was done in patriarchal times. It is in the life of the State rather than that of the family, that we have civilization. The very word civilization implies this—*civis*, being a citizen, and *civitas*, a State.

The importance of national relations may be seen in the consideration of the nature of history. What is history? Is it a collection of the biographies of individual men? We do not, as a fact, give to such collection the name of history. History has been called "the biography of society." But of society founded upon what basis, working by what agencies, involving what interests, proposing what ends? Not surely voluntary associations, formed for the promotion of the arts, or commerce, or philosophy, or benevolent undertakings. Such associations are too limited in the numbers which belong to them,

too narrow and partial in the ends they propose and the means they use, to justify us in calling their biography history. We must find a society which, as nearly as possible, shall comprehend in its members the entire human race, command in its workings all human energies, involve in its consideration all human interests; the biography of such a society we may call history. Such a society we find in the State. And it is because the whole human race is gathered into nations; it is because the State proposes as its true object the highest good of all its citizens; and especially is it because the State as a sovereign power, not only holds the persons and property of its citizens at its disposal, but deals with its citizens and with all mankind as moral beings, and as itself a moral person responsible to God,—being a sovereign only as his minister;—it is because of all this, that we give the name history to the biography of nations rather than to that of any other society. And the idea of history generally accepted is this,—it is a record of the changes which come over the aspect and fortunes of nations, in their self-development and their mutual intercourse.*

* See Dr. Arnold's "Lectures on Modern History." The above statement is correct, so long as we take a merely *natural* view of mankind—so long as we view men merely in their *moral* relations. Viewing men by the light of revelation and in relations more strictly *religious*, Church-biography would still better deserve the name of history. But for some reason, these religious relations are not commonly recognized in their importance. Like the historian, the moral philosopher commonly ignores man's lapsed condition, and all the

The highest truth of history is unquestionably the Providence of God. Now, it gives us a most impressive view of the importance of national relations, when we consider the Bible representation of nations as the great agents of God's Providence. The Assyrian nation sent against the people of Israel is "the rod of his anger" and "the staff of his indignation." Said God to his ancient people, "I will bring a nation on you from far, O house of Israel." God of old sent his prophets to this nation and that; Elijah to Israel, Jeremiah to Judah, Jonah to Assyria.

Moreover, the Bible recognizes the importance of national relations in the position it assigns to nations in the historic and prophetic development of the plan for man's redemption. Before the advent of our Saviour, God was in covenant with a nation. To conserve the true religion amidst the corruptions which a second time were coming over the whole earth, God took Abraham and his family

great truths which distinguish supernatural religion. See Wardlaw's "Christian Ethics."

It ought also to be observed that human governments, at the best, are obliged to leave many interests of their citizens uncared for, or to be cared for by other agents than their own; also, that human governments are often corrupt and fail to discharge their proper functions. Hence, the historian needs the supplement of individual biographies, and transactions of voluntary societies, and pictures of domestic and social life, in order to a full representation of his subject. Who would dispense with the Book of Ruth in the Old Testament history, or with Macaulay's picture of England in 1685 in his English history?

into special relations to himself. Yet God did not see fit to keep these special relations confined to a single family in successive generations. It entered directly into his plan, to make of this chosen family a nation, to set them in a land of their own, to give them a government of their own, to place them amidst the other nations of the earth. The influence of a nation was required to prepare the world for the coming of Messiah. So also in prophecy. Whatever may be thought of the beasts of the Revelation, with their heads and horns, the beasts of Daniel are distinctly stated to be "Kingdoms upon Earth." They are States and Empires. It is, moreover, a kingdom which the Lord God will set up upon earth, which, as a little stone cut out of the mountain, shall smite and break and crush the kingdoms of earth, and itself occupy their place. "The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever."

With this consideration of the idea of a nation, and of the importance of national relations, let us now, turning and beholding the race of men dwelling together in a family of nations, ask more particularly after their duties and destinies.

I. The State has a religious character. Nations derive their existence as such from God. The State is of divine institution. It enjoys and exercises divine prerogatives. It is hence under duty to God; it has herein a religious character.

I do not propose to argue the question of the nature of civil government. I will not undertake to show that the theory of a social compact—the theory that all just powers of government are derived from the people, who voluntarily yield them up and consent to their exercise—that this theory is false. Enough for me—enough for you, I presume,—that it is unscriptural and infidel. Enough for us that the Scriptures say, "The powers that be are ordained of God," and the civil ruler is "the minister of God." I do not deny,—the Scriptures do not deny—the distinction between things *civil* and things *religious*. The Christian does not demand that the State shall be a theocracy. The State and the Church has each its appropriate end and sphere. The prime end of the State is the dispensing of justice, the protecting of its citizens, and the securing by agriculture and commerce and the arts, and by the intelligence and virtue of its citizens, of the general welfare. The prime end of the Church, so far as man is concerned, is the promotion of his spiritual and eternal good, through the agency of the Scriptures of revealed truth. The sphere of the one is the affairs of this life,—that of the other, the affairs of the life to come. Yet the State and the Church are not wholly separated and absolutely independent; and neither is independent of God.

Again: Man in his entirety, is a religious being, and must carry his religion with him into all his relations. He is a religious citizen; so that not only is government

instituted by God and to be administered in his name, and is therefore religious, but being administered by men and upon men, who themselves are under responsibility to God, it is therefore again religious.

And again: Although the prime end of the State be the promotion of man's temporal welfare, and that of the Church, the promotion of his spiritual welfare, and although the prime sphere of the State be the things of the present life, and that of the Church those of the life to come, yet things temporal and things spiritual, and the things of the present life and those of the life to come, have most intimate and important connections. The spiritual welfare tells upon the temporal, and the life to come is but the issue and result of the present life. Here, once more, is the State seen to have a religious character. All this admits of abundant proof and illustration.

The State, then, has a character directly religious, due to its origin and nature, as instituted by God for doing his ministry with men. Hence, its laws should be founded on the highest views of the divine will ascertainable. It should enact that alone to be crime which God pronounces to be sin. And again, the State has a character indirectly religious, in view of the fact, that it is administered by and upon those who are under religious obligations, and in view of the fact that religion has material connection with that public welfare which it is the design and duty of the State to promote. The

State must, on the one hand, respect the conscience of its citizens, leaving them free in religious opinions and practices; and yet, on the other hand, it must seek to promote the interests of true religion, with whose prosperity the public welfare is vitally connected.

It belongs to our government, my hearers, to conform its legislation to the principles of the Bible, and to impose its penalties for violated law, on the authority and with the sanction of the God of the Bible: and it belongs to our government, while indulging the largest and most liberal toleration of religious opinions and practices, still to seek the diffusion and establishment of Christianity throughout the length and breadth of our land. It is right that our government enforces, to a good degree, the observance of the Christian Sabbath. It is demanded that such observance be enforced in still larger degree. Our government, if it be bound to afford an education to the children of its citizens at all, is bound to give them a Christian education. The Bible should be in all our Public Schools. Chaplains should be provided for all State institutions, as they are for the Army and Navy.

I know, indeed, that these views, when fully expressed, are not generally conceded. Many seem to think that government has no proper connection with religion. The cry of Church and State—of the invasion of religious rights—is raised against these views.* But not only has

* See Congressional Reports—Col. R. M. Johnson on Sunday Mails, and Mr. Petit on Chaplains to Congress. Of course, in practically meeting and

government a necessary connection with religion, but what may seem still more objectionable, the freest government must have reference, in its laws and institutions, to some *form* of religion, as that held by the great body of its citizens: and it is a mistake, as egregious as it is frequent, which supposes that because our Federal Constitution prescribes no religion as that of this country, and unites the government to no Church, our country is therefore as much Pagan or Infidel as it is Christian. The Constitution and the legislation of our country presuppose and take for granted, if they do not distinctly affirm, that Bible Christianity is the religion of this country. And they must do so, in order that this be a free government, since the great body of our people are believers in this religion. The President of the United States, standing in the portico of the Capitol, before the face of heaven and in view of the assembled people, swears upon the Bible to support the Constitution. The great functions of government cease to be exercised among us when the morning of the Christian Sabbath dawns. The Executive closes his mansion, Congress vacates its halls, the judge comes down from his bench;—

adjusting the two claims upon the government, first to respect the conscience of its citizens, and secondly, to promote the interests of religion, great diversity of opinion may exist even among those who hold to the same principles. There is room for a variety of prudential considerations. Yet the *principles* above expressed are discarded in the documents referred to, as they very often are elsewhere.

all pause and wait through the day of which the God of the Bible and the Lord our Saviour has said—it is mine. How solemn the testimony, and how frequently recurring, that this is a Christian nation.

And whose rights are invaded by this observance of the Christian religion? The Jew's? Why he can observe his Sabbath on Saturday, and the law will protect him in the observance. None shall molest or make him afraid. The infidel's? It may be that he is put to inconvenience. He cannot have his cause tried in Court; he cannot lay his petition before Congress or the Executive; he may not be able to procure his letters from the Post Office: but is this an invasion of his rights? Who has the right to compel the judge to violate the Sabbath by trying his cause, or the mail-carrier or post master by delivering his letters? Would not the non-observance of the Sabbath by the government operate at once to close the doors of office against four-fifths of our conscientious citizens? For the very reason, then, that the body of our people are Christians, our government does and must, as a free government, respect the Christian religion; and furthermore, because this religion is, as we know, the true religion of God, and its influence most happy in sustaining a free government, the State is bound not simply coldly to protect it in common with all forms of religion, but warmly to foster it as its own chosen religion.

It would not be well longer to dwell on this topic. It may only be added that while the understanding of this

subject is of the very first consequence to us as a nation, there is no subject of general interest which seems to be so little understood.*

Nations of necessity have a religious character. The civil government is of God's ordination, and does God's ministry. The civil government is administered by and upon men who are religious beings, who cannot under any circumstances divest themselves of their religious character. The prevalence of true religion amongst its citizens, is of the highest advantage to the State.

Every nation has its God or its gods. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." Blessed is America so long as a pure, scriptural Christianity stimulates and governs its public life.

It may be mentioned, but need not be discussed as a distinct topic, although its full consideration would greatly enforce the views just presented, that, as a matter of fact, God does regard nations as responsible persons, and does hold them in strict account to himself. The highest truth of universal history being the universal and comprehending providence of God, and the great factors of history being the nations of mankind, and the personal and responsible character of nations continuing only in this life and obtaining God's full judgment of

* A volume entitled "The Position of Christianity in the United States," by Stephen Colwell, Esq. of Philadelphia, deserves the attentive and serious perusal of every American citizen.

mercy or wrath during the time of their present continuance, the historic page, recording the majestic movements of empires in their rise and fall, becomes unspeakably sublime as the record of the Almighty's manifested character, smiling and blessing in their righteous prosperity, and frowning and overthrowing in their guilty doom.

II. But let us pass to another view of nations. The race of men we behold in a family of nations. We may consider the relations of these nations one to another.

I use the word *family* in reference to nations, to indicate at once, at the outset, and as fully as possible, their true relations. Nations are most closely and most tenderly related. Their relation is one of blood, and their one parent is God. "He hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation." Each nation has a certain completeness in itself, yet it is but a partial completeness. Nations are still connected. They are dependent on one another. They are under obligations to one another. They are alike and together bound to the same God. They are a brotherhood before God their common Father. Patriotism has its limits, and philanthropy, its appropriate and transcendent sphere.

See the physical dependence of nations. Does not every nation on the face of the earth contribute to the conveniences and comforts and luxuries, not to say the

necessities of our every-day life? And do we not, as a nation, contribute something for the physical well-being of every nation in turn? What mean these thousand ships, at all times and in all directions traversing the main? Are they not all hastening on the wings of the wind, with their precious burdens, to do the ministries of nations one toward another? All commerce is significant, first of all, of national interdependence.

This mutual dependence in things physical is, however, but an image of a higher dependence. What is civilization? Is it the culture of the national life? Yet how is national life cultivated? Is it by self-effort only, put forth from a stimulus self-begotten? Or is not civilization, like the education of the individual, in some measure dependent on the efforts of others? Must there not be an outward contact, and a stimulus provoked by such contact? Turn a child into the woods, and let him grow up to manhood without the society or the sight of his fellow-men. Where is his self-culture? He is a wild man of the woods; he is a barbarian. So nations need the stimulus which comes from a contact with their fellow nations; and that, not only that they may advance in civilization, but even that they may save themselves from going down into barbarism. See China, the largest empire of men, yet separated from its neighbors by a stone wall. See Hindostan, insulated by surrounding seas and mountains, and destitute of commerce for many hundred years. See Africa, secluded from all the world by its

miasmatic regions and its fever-bound coasts. stereotyped character! What stagnant life! What hopeless barbarism! Interchange of thought among the nations,—communication of the products of art and literature, and of the discoveries of science;—this is requisite for the welfare of nations.

It would easily follow from this mutual dependence of nations, even if it did not come to us in a more direct way, that the intercommunion of nations should be guided and governed by religious principles, and for the end of highest mutual spiritual benefit. Nay, the statement may be made thus, in reference to us who know what true religion is, and who are bound to go according to the light we possess, and not according to the darkness of others,—that the intercommunion of nations should be conducted on Christian principles, and for the end of the diffusion and establishment of the Gospel of Christ.

Blessed is the nation whose God being the Lord, who, as the first-born, and fullest-grown, and highest-favored, in the Lord's family of nations, becomes the loving instructor and helper of the younger brethren.

Looking this day upon the brotherhood of nations, we behold one sight which might excite our joyful hope, were it not for another closely connected with it, which must excite our astonishment and sorrow. We behold, on the one hand, the nations of the earth brought into close proximity and to the possibility of easy friendship, by the many physical improvements of the age. These

improvements, as we see, are made and first used by enlightened and Christian nations,—and we are encouraged to ask, shall not these improvements be the channels and vehicles for conveying to all nations the influences of the gospel? In this bringing of the ends of the earth together, by those whose great glory is their possession of the knowledge of God's salvation, shall not "all the ends of the earth," through their agency, speedily be brought "to see the salvation of God?" But alas! The ardency of our hopes is quenched, when we behold this day the most enlightened and powerful and happy of the whole brotherhood of nations, whose great tie is that of natural and Christian love, and whose great duty is to strengthen the cords of love amongst all their brotherhood,—when we behold these nations, submitting themselves to the demon of national hatred and revenge, employing the agencies which should convey the gospel of peace to all mankind, in transporting the munitions of war, and then putting forth all their skill and energies in planning and executing, with the aids of the most matured science, and by means of the most ingenious and mighty enginery, the devilish work of national desolation and destruction.

Can we, my hearers, conceive of a higher and more horrid contradiction of the whole spirit of our religion than a national war? And can there be anything more discouraging to him who hopes for the speedy diffusion of the Gospel amidst the nations, than the contemplation

of the present war,—a war not only waged by nations the most Christian, but a war involving no principle and devoid of all glory,—a war stamped in its every feature, and chargeable at its every step, with the attribute and the crime of murder.

O when shall war be recognized in its brutality and fiendishness and hellish horrors? When shall patriotism separate itself from a proud ambition and a cruel revenge, and become the loving handmaid of a pure philanthropy? When shall Christian nations become capable of a Christian transaction? Must "the sword devour forever?"

III. We may not omit on such an occasion, and with such a subject before us, to speak of the destiny of our own nation.

It would seem from many considerations often presented, that God intends great things for us as a nation. The time and circumstances of the original settlement of our country, and the character of the original settlers, is regarded as one indication of promise. How long God kept this continent concealed from the view of the civilized world! And, when it was discovered, how long he kept back the nations from its successful settlement! Not until the Protestant Reformation had wrought its great results, and nations were prepared for the work under its tuition, did God begin to people this country;—and even then, it was a "winnowed seed" which he planted here. Men tried in the fires of persecution, and strong in the

love of God and the desire of liberty, laid the foundations of our republic. Is not this peculiar beginning prophetic of a glorious consummation?

Our past experience and present condition seem to confirm the tokens of our auspicious beginning. Colonial dependence has given way to National independence. Thirteen States have increased to thirty-one. Three millions of people have increased to thirty. Immense forests have been subdued, and the soil yields supplies for the famishing of other lands. Great manufactories crowd our rivers and darken our towns. Our commerce whitens every sea and swarms in every port. Our people are intelligent, and virtuous, and happy beyond all example. Our government is strong and efficient. What is needed to make our destiny glorious, but just to go on in the way that we have come?

Then see the prospect which invites us on. Vast territories are still unoccupied. What shall prevent the flood of population from pouring westward and overflowing these territories? Our internal resources have only begun to be developed. What shall prevent their utmost and magnificent development? The commerce of the Pacific waits to be ours. How long till Pacific railroads shall bind our eastern and western coasts together, and our country, standing in the midst of the earth and reaching out its arms on either hand, clasp the entire sphere in its embrace? Our country is in the dew of its rejoicing youth, and has but the dimmest consciousness

and dream of its own strength, and who can predict the glory of its manhood, when in the fullest self-consciousness, it shall exert to the utmost its matured and mighty energies?

Thus are we accustomed to talk. Our destiny is manifest—our glory is inevitable. It is pleasant to talk thus, and it is unpleasant to talk otherwise. Yet we ought to desire to see and know the truth. Self-flattery is an odious folly. Is our destiny, then, manifest? Is our glory inevitable? Has God so conspicuously favored us that he cannot but continue to bless? Ah! It is our self-flattery and odious folly to think so.

We need not look again to our history or our prospects, to gather evidences of a different destiny, although such evidences might not be wanting. Yes, we might find the evidences which, duly weighed, would make us shudder in view of our possible or probable future. We might come to think it very problematical whether our country has sufficient vital force to work into good American citizens the hordes of infidels, paupers, criminals, cast upon our shores from the nations of the old world;—whether our country has sufficient wisdom to guide its own vexed domestic questions to a proper and satisfactory issue, and to balance and regulate the rival and numberless interests of a country widening indefinitely in extent;—whether—but no, we do not need thus to forecast the future to ascertain our probable destiny. We may determine the question by the teaching of God's word.

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." And blessed is that nation alone. Here is the solution of the question of our destiny. It is in making the Lord the God of our country, that we are safe—that we are prosperous—that our glorious destiny becomes inevitable. Our destiny is left to ourselves. The means of its glory are placed in our hands. We may use them or not, as we will.

And now, I utter it to you, my hearers and fellow-citizens, as the solemn testimony of the Lord our God, that so surely as ignorance and moral corruption and lust of power, become generally prevalent, and popery and infidelity attain the supremacy among us, it matters not at all that we have had a ballot-box, and a free press, and free schools, and the whole circle of liberal institutions,—these will become but the insignia of our shame; it matters not that we have had a boundless territory, and a teeming soil, and mighty cities, and universal commerce,—the grass will grow again on our prairies,—the red man return to his forsaken forests,—our cities become black with desolation, and the sails of our commerce be rent on the seas, or the hulks of our commerce rot at our wharves; it matters not that God has been wonderfully gracious to us as a nation,—the more wonderful the grace, the deeper the insult and crime of our despising it, and the deeper our doom;—this, this is our manifest destiny.

And it is only as America teaches her children to fear God and do their duty; it is only as our virtuous citizenship escape from the chains of corrupt party and procure for themselves a fair representation in the offices of government—exerting themselves for the purification of corrupt men, rather than for the promotion of their evil designs; it is, in a word, only as the power of our blessed religion shall go out from the hearts of the truly pious in our land, leavening the mass of the population and bringing them under its sway;—it is only as we truly make the Lord our country's God, that we can hope to be blessed, and can, with any just confidence, await our country's future glory.

Need I, my hearers, deduce and enforce the exhortations of this subject? Or do they not lie upon its surface, and do they not make their own appeal to every patriot's and Christian's heart?

The God of nations, looking forth upon our happy land this day, may be conceived as breathing the benevolent desire once expressed in behalf of his ancient people, "O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever."

N. B. In the delivery of the foregoing discourse, the following remarks were interjected near the commencement:

"Permit me to state to you my conviction, that desirable as it is that days of religious observance be appointed by our civil authorities, the regular appointment of annual fast-days or thanksgivings, will not secure for any long period a general and hearty observance. I should much prefer the appointment by our civil authorities of a fast-day, in view of any public calamity impending or experienced, or of a day of thanksgiving, in view of deliverence or exemption from such calamity. In such case we might hope that the day would secure a suitable and profitable observance."

It is the writer's apprehension that days of special religious observance occurring at regular intervals, and hence occurring, oftentimes, when there is no special providential call for a religious service, and being destitute of the binding obligation a divine appointment, will degenerate into mere holidays; and in his opinion, the providential call ought to guide our rulers in the designation of times of special religious observance; so that when we fast, we do so in direct view of special calamity, and when we render thanks, we do so for special mercies actually experienced. The thanksgiving of last year occurred at a time of most trying financial embarrassment, at the close of a season remarkable for

its drought and meagre harvests, and for the prevalence of disease and the destruction of property by land and sea. Surely, God called us then to humble ourselves and fast, rather than to rejoice and give thanks, and a thanksgiving service was appropriate only for the reason that God always deals with us better than we deserve. We need the evident appropriateness of the service to secure its continued and suitable observance. Who does not remember the appointment by our national Executive, some years since, of a day of national humiliation, when a visitation of the cholera was threatened? And how solemn and affecting the service of that day throughout the land! In New England, the regular, annual thanksgiving preserves its sacredness through customs and associations, which were established in the very infancy of the country, and which have grown up with it,—customs and associations, which cannot elsewhere be created.

BV
K305

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
0 021 064 086 1